

# VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

SEPTEMBER 2006

TWO DOLLARS







## Colonel W. Gerald Massengill Interim Director



As many of you know, the cost of doing business seems to always be on the increase, including the outdoor recreation business. We estimate that there are more than 600,000 anglers, more than 300,000 hunters and nearly 250,000 registered motorboats in Virginia. To meet the demands of a growing Commonwealth, the Department must invest its money in quality facilities and programs, and quality personnel to manage those facilities and deliver the programs. We must also invest in new technologies and services to be responsive to the changing needs of our constituents. One such recent investment for the Department is the King and Queen Hatchery.

King and Queen Hatchery, like many of the Department's aging fish culture stations, was originally constructed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in 1936. Renovation planning began with a budget request in 1998 with funding available in 2000. This facility serves as a cornerstone of our warm water fisheries services.

The Fisheries Division of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries owns nine fish cultural stations around the state. Four are warm water facilities, that hatch and rear warm water species, like muskellunge, northern pike, striped bass, walleye, catfish, largemouth bass, bluegill and redear sunfish.

These warm water stations provide up to 5 million fish each year for stocking in Virginia waters. In addition, they produce 10 to 15 million striped bass for trading for other fish species with 15 states.

The King and Queen Hatchery hatchery and rears walleye, channel catfish, American shad, striped bass, redear, largemouth bass and bluegill. This facility has also been instrumental in the successful restoration of striped bass and the promising restoration of American shad populations.

The Department was created to manage wildlife and inland fish within Virginia and this newly renovated hatchery will help us to continue to meet our mission. We take our stewardship of natural resources, and the fiscal responsibility that comes with it, very seriously. I am proud to be part of this group and its dedication to its mission.

When you purchase a hunting or fishing license, register your boat, acquire a conservation license plate, or donate directly to the Department's Nongame Fund, you are investing in Virginia's natural resources for future generations. In a sense, you become a stockholder. I invite you to come and see your investment by visiting the King and Queen Hatchery, and any of our facilities, and by enjoying Virginia's natural resources through fishing, hunting and boating.



Left to right: Gory F. Mortel, VDGIF Director of Fisheries; C. Morsholl Davidson, VDGIF Board Member; Jeff Corbin, Assistant Secretary Virginia Department of Natural Resources; Bob Ropp, Timmons Group; Chris Dohlem, King & Queen Hatchery Superintendent; James C. Adams, VDGIF Capitol Programs Director; Joey Sonders, J. Sonders Construction; Ron Southwick, VDGIF Assistant Director of Fisheries; Colonel W. Gerald Massengill, VDGIF Interim Director; James M. Wood, VDGIF Capitol Outlay Program Manager and Charles G. McDoniel, former VDGIF Board Chairman officially reopened the newly renovated King and Queen Hatchery on June 1, 2006.

### Mission Statement

To manage Virginia's wildlife and inland fish to maintain optimum populations of all species to serve the needs of the Commonwealth; to provide opportunity for all to enjoy wildlife, inland fish, boating and related outdoor recreation; to promote safety for persons and property in connection with boating, hunting and fishing.

**Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's Wildlife and Natural Resources**

Commonwealth of Virginia  
Timothy M. Kaine, Governor

## L HUNTING & FISHING ICENSE FEES

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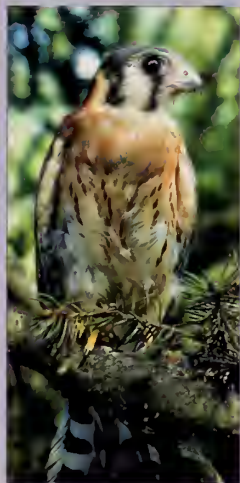
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# SEPTEMBER CONTENTS



## About the cover:

The sparrow hawk, also known as kestrel, is the small, mourning dove-sized hawk seen sitting on telephone and power lines along roadsides across the state, especially in winter. Due to

its small size, this raptor dines primarily on small mammals and insects. It will also take snakes, lizards and small birds. Kestrels readily make use of man-made perches such as power lines from which they scan for food. They also frequently hover in place to scrutinize movements on the ground below. Kestrels depend on open grassy or pasture type habitats to locate food. Photo ©Bill Lea.

## VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

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## 4 Virginia Naturally by Gail Brown

Promoting lifelong learning about Virginia's environment and stewardship of the Commonwealth's natural resources.

## 11 Bobbin' For Bluegill by Tee Clarkson

Bream, redear or pumpkinseed—no matter what you call them, fishing for sunfish is a great way to brighten your next angling adventure.

## 14 Climbing the Last Light by William Funk

Interest in the annual fall hawk migration along Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains is soaring among avid bird watchers.

## 21 A Really Bright Idea by Bruce Ingram

Sporting blaze orange even when it's not required not only is a good idea, but it could save your life.

## 24 Cranking It Up A Notch by Ken Perrotte

Virginia's new crossbow season scores high marks.

## 29 SEPTEMBER JOURNAL

### 32 Recipes

*How to Make Venison Tender*

### 33 On The Water

*Radios for Recreational Boating Safety*

### 34 Photo Tips

*Learning to Use Your Digital Camera's Menu*

### 35 Naturally Wild

*Wilson's Plover*





Top: Perrymont Elementary School gardens and birdhouses provide learning centers for everyone. Above: At Pearson's Corner gardening and math go hand-in-hand. Upper right: Principal Karen Nelson from Perrymont Elementary School enjoys planting grasses with students to create a wetland area.



# Virgi

story and photos by Gail Brown

**V**irginia Naturally, as defined by the Virginia Environmental Educational Advisory Committee is the "Commonwealth's initiative to promote lifelong learning about Virginia's environment and stewardship of the Commonwealth's natural and historic resources." *Virginia Naturally Schools* is the state's official environmental education school recognition program. Designed and put in place in 2000, and administered by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries with support from other state agencies, it is the means by which our state supports and recognizes schools that are blazing a trail in promoting good stewardship of our natural resources.





**Left: Trevilians Elementary students demonstrate keen observation skills identifying plants and critters.**

# nia Naturally

## *Making Connections With Each Other and the Natural World*

Where would we find ourselves if a group of educators, parents, community leaders and state agencies followed their hearts, came together, and worked together at the local schoolhouse to solve, or even prevent, environmental problems? And what would result if all children, from the youngest kindergartners to the almost graduated seniors, were involved in hands-on scientific studies designed to teach good stewardship of our natural resources? Chances are we would look ahead and see pride, hope, excitement and civic leadership on the horizon.

Chances are we would find ourselves in a Virginia Naturally school.

To appreciate the beauty of nature, you need to experience it with all of your senses: the colors of the trees against the blue of the sky, the smell of the woods in the springtime, the feel of rippling water, the taste of vegetables you grew yourself—all provide a pathway for knowledge, understanding, appreciation and ownership to grow. To ensure future generations have the same opportunity to hunt, fish and know the wilderness in the way past generations have taken for granted, we must first provide all Virginians an opportunity to establish a connection with the natural world. We take care

of what we love or recognize as valuable, and we can't love and respect what we do not feel connected to or what we do not know. Virginia Naturally schools teach students to know the natural world by allowing students to share the fun and awe of interactions with plants and animals on a personal level. And when these connections are made the foundation for a lifelong love affair takes root.

Virginia Naturally schools are leading the way in their communities; communities large and small, rural and urban, where all citizens, school-age children as well, have opportunities to work together to identify and solve problems affecting their environment and thus the quality of their lives. Using inquiry-based research methods in gardens and streams as well as in classrooms, these schools work to develop in all an understanding and love of nature as well as an appreciation of the history of the community and the area they call home. Virginia Naturally



**Above: Hungry birds keep students at Ruby Carver Elementary School busy.**



## Virginia Naturally Schools 2004-2005

Perrymont Elementary School, Lynchburg, works with their supportive PTA and volunteer Master Gardeners to provide hands-on studies of soil and plants for their 3rd and 4th grade students. They are a Virginia Wild School Site and hope to become a Wetland School Site in the future.

Chincoteague Elementary School, Accomack County, is fortunate to have considerable support for staff development from the county as well as the school administration. Their conservation sponsor attended a Native Wildlife Habitat Workshop, another the Outdoor Classroom Teachers' workshop, and others worked with Master Gardeners. An in-service from the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge provided training for the entire faculty.

B. C. Charles Elementary, Newport News, was led in the right direction when the administration, teachers, their PTA and area businesses all worked together to turn their inner courtyard into a beautiful outdoor classroom. The student-led Garden Patrol works to maintain the area that allows scientific investigation to take place in a meaningful hands-on way. Fifth grade students also participate in oyster gardening.

Coventry Elementary School, York County, was selected by Texas A&M, (the National Junior Master Gardeners' Headquarters), to participate in the *Literature in the Garden* program, which helps integrate science standards across curricula. They also created year-round gardens including vegetable gardens, container gardens and herb gardens. They are creating a songbird garden as well.



**Above: Students at Ruby Carver Elementary use investigative techniques to learn science concepts in their outdoor classroom.**

schools are on a great journey, taking students and their families forward in seeking and sharing knowledge, forming a bond with the natural world and with each other as a community of learners.

### *Environmental Studies and Standards of Learning*

Parents across the Commonwealth are aware of the Standards of Learning and share the concern that their children receive the best possible education. We all benefit, young and old, if our children can compete in the global marketplace, become lifelong learners, and are provided opportunities to practice the core values we model for them at home. *Virginia Naturally is not an add-on program put in place by schools to teach science, but rather a statewide initiative to promote the teaching of the Standards of Learning that relate to environmental science in a manner that frees students from their desks, supports teachers with the materials and expertise of dedicated personnel*

from public agencies, and empowers and encourages parents and local businesses to become involved in their schools. The Virginia Naturally Web site, [www.VaNaturally.com](http://www.VaNaturally.com), is an excellent resource for administrators K-12 in developing school improvement plans that make a real difference for their community.

### *Virginia Naturally Schools are Making a Difference*

While a straight line is the shortest road between two points, Virginia Naturally schools are moving forward in a more, well, natural way. Programs that focus on memorizing facts may cover more territory or curriculum in an expedient manner, but higher learning skills are often sacrificed to cover just one more chapter. In the end, you will find yourself where you want to be (educated) only when you have taken the time to really understand where you are going. Taking the long and winding road may be the more difficult trek but it allows you to see and experience so much more. Public or private, primary, middle, or high school, Virginia Naturally schools:



**Above: At Trevilians Elementary students learn about insects in their own garden.**



## Virginia Naturally Schools 2004-2005

**North Branch School**, Afton, sits atop gigantic Afton Mountain. *The Little Engine That Could* of Virginia Naturally schools educates students pre-school to grade 12. This tiny private school, (little-known in comparison to its supportive partner, The Wintergreen Resort), participates in the symbolic monarch migration program. All students enjoy time on their nature trail, participating in age appropriate environmental experiences.

**Saltville Elementary School**, Smyth County, is a six-year member of the Virginia Naturally schools recognition program. Patriotic and civic minded Saltville students planted a flower garden which, when in full bloom, is a brilliant display of the American flag. How creative! And what a beautiful reference to use when beginning discussions on civic issues or historic concepts.

**Elkton Middle School**, Rockingham County, has completed two rain gardens that collect run-off from the parking lot, sidewalks, and school grounds. Staff members at Elkton developed a 6th grade ecology elective, and students there gain outdoor experience monitoring water quality and seining for aquatic life at the Island Ford Boat Ramp.

**Dominion High School**, Loudoun County, sits upon 87 wooded acres close to the hub-bub of metropolitan Washington, D.C. An outdoor classroom and nature trail are available to all for scientific studies. Dedicated environmental science teacher and leader of their Virginia Naturally efforts, Mary Young-Lutz, organized their efforts to identify and tag three endangered wood turtles on their campus.



**Above: The dragonfly pond at Pearson's Corner is the perfect place to write in your journal or finish that math calculation.**

### 1. Promote Inquiry-Based Learning and Hands-On Experiences Out-of-Doors.

Students at Elkton Middle School, in Rockingham County, seine for aquatic life and monitor water quality at Island Ford boat ramp. Such experiences take more time than traditional classroom lectures, but result in greater understanding of how our actions impact the waterways and why we need to be responsible for our trash and use of chemicals.

### 2. Work Closely With Local Environmental Agencies.

When the Chesterfield County Public Schools partnered with local non-profit environmental organization, Friends of Chesterfield's Riverfront, they received a National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration grant, and elementary and middle school teachers received training that enabled them to develop outdoor gardens to be used as teaching centers for all students. Many state agencies provide free or low cost training programs for educators so that they feel empowered to teach the Standards of Learning in the out-of-doors rather than just out of books. Hundreds of Virginia's students benefit when educators take advantage of free training and resource materials from agencies such as The Department of Forestry's *Project Learning Tree*, Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and Department of Environmental Quality's *Project WET*, and Department of Game and Inland Fisheries in conjunction with the Virginia Division of



**Above: This student-made sculpture adorns the science wing on the campus of Trinity High School.**



**Creating a wetland at Perrymont improves the school campus and helps protect our natural resources.**



## Virginia Naturally Schools 2004-2005

**Mount Vernon Elementary School**, York County, broke ground for Mustang Gardens, a major undertaking of different gardens and also an outdoor classroom. A local 4-H Environmental Science and Animal Club planted ornamental onions (food of the colonists), Yorktown Snowflower tree, (signature tree for the Jamestown celebrations), a xeriscope garden, and a Native American tree garden as well. Students participate in an after school Junior Master Gardeners club.

**Greenbriar Intermediate School**, Chesapeake, has revitalized their courtyard and will have an ecosystem that simulates a river and its watershed. They recycle aluminum cans, inventory plants, and this year put tadpoles in their pond for all to study. Their schoolyard habitat has expanded into a wildlife active sanctuary.

**Manchester High School**, Chesterfield County, participates in a water quality monitoring program and works with a local environmental organization to create greenways by planting trees as buffers along Swift Creek. The school has a school-wide recycling program led by students in the ecology class.

**Grymes Memorial Elementary School**, Orange County, works closely with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation to help keep our waterways clean. Their second grade made two environmental videos, one on the Chesapeake Bay and one on the ocean life, while their fourth graders led the way for participation in Cornell University's *Classroom Bird Watch*.

**Trevilians Elementary School**, Louisa County, studies nature in their bird and butterfly habitat area and also teaches students to perform abiotic tests to assess stream quality. Students at Trevilians enjoy walking their nature trail and learning in their outdoor classroom.

**Ruby Carver Elementary School**, Henrico County, added two waterfalls to their ponds, use investigative techniques to learn science concepts in their outdoor classroom, they participate in a flower sale and festival each spring, and enjoy a vibrant environmental mural painted under a canopy by area artist Ken Hayden. The mural depicts bay and ocean life.

**Crestwood Elementary School**, Chesterfield County, studies plants, soil and nature in a greenhouse donated by their supportive PTA. Students, K-5, have an opportunity to raise and tag monarch butterflies. This past year a record 300 monarchs were tagged.



**Above:** Students at Trinity researched native species, then created stepping stones for their gardens. **Upper right:** Testing the soil and water provides exciting learning experiences for students in Trevilians' after school environmental program.



the Isaac Walton League of America's *Project WILD*.

### 3. Form Partnerships with Local Businesses.

Peasley Middle School, in Gloucester County, received a grant from Dominion Virginia Power to create an outdoor classroom; B. C. Charles Elementary, in Newport News, partnered with local businesses to turn their inner courtyard into a beautiful area for students to study environmental issues, and St. Paul High School and the city of St. Paul have numerous partners helping them achieve their environmental goals. Virginia Naturally schools are stronger and better able to meet their educational goals because of the strong supportive partnerships they secure.

### 4. Involve Parents and Families.

Perrymont Elementary School, Lynchburg, Saltville Elementary School, Smyth County, and Trevilians Elementary School, Louisa



**Above:** Monitoring the creek and the wooded area behind their school is taken seriously by teachers and students at Dominion High School.

County, are but a few of the schools who cite their PTA as partners in their efforts to promote good stewardship of the environment. Hands-on environmental activities provide numerous opportunities for families (including grandparents) to contribute to and be a part of educational activities at their local schools.

### 5. Integrate Environmental Science Standards of Learning Across All Curricula



John Wayland Elementary School, in Rockingham County, selected 25 students who each received an acorn from a century old oak tree (The Old Oak Tree) located in their town square. Mount Vernon Elementary School, in York County, planted a Yorktown Snowflower Tree and a Native American garden like those of the first colonists. Learning to be proud of your community's history is a result of learning about its natural resources. Coventry Elementary School, in York County, teaches English and science standards through their *Literature in the Garden* program while Trinity Episcopal High School's (Richmond City) art and biology students worked together to place metal sculptures in their gardens. Seeing the big picture rather than memorizing isolated facts helps students develop comprehension

complete an application, and apply to be recognized as a Virginia Naturally school. If you are a parent or volunteer and believe your school meets the criteria listed in the application, or should become part of this effort, bring this article to your principal and offer to help! Remember, this is not a one-year effort, but rather a commitment to teach the environmental Standards of Learning in a way that positively impacts the lives of the families in your community for generations to come. By joining, you will be networked with hundreds of environmental agencies and like-minded educators who share a love of nature, gain from each other's expertise, and want to become good stewards of the environment. Becoming a Virginia Naturally school is like finally getting a chance to go on the big explore we longed to experience

## Virginia Naturally Schools 2004-2005

**Pearson's Corner Elementary**, Hanover County, just added an *additional* outdoor classroom where students learn about soil and plants from Master Gardener volunteers; they have a greenhouse and a dragonfly pond for all to enjoy while learning about nature. They work closely with their PTA and have supportive community partnerships.

**Trinity Episcopal High School**, Richmond, joined the Chesapeake Bay Foundation to help lobby for water quality. Students monitor water quality and study nature in outdoor classrooms that reflect the efforts of art and biology students who work together on an integrated curriculum.

**John Wayland Elementary School**, Rockingham County, provides students an opportunity to learn civic responsibility along with their environmental studies through participation in the *Read to Feed* program, an outreach program that addresses hunger and environmental issues. Students also participate in the Earth Day Grocery Bag project and the Heifer International program.

**Peasley Middle School**, Gloucester County, promotes environmental stewardship when students at Peasley participate in an oyster project and learn about recycling through Old Dominion University's Trashanator II plays. They received a grant from Dominion Virginia Power to support their environmental studies.

**Saint Paul High School**, Wise County, has a committed staff and student body who are serious about their environmental studies as proven by the fact that their "Team Estonia" received the Presidential Environmental Youth Award, recognition at the national level! Students logged over 1,000 hours of environmental service for the community *after* putting in a full day at school!

**Camp E. W. Young**, Norfolk Public Schools, lost more than 100 trees during Hurricane Isabel. Undaunted, they partnered with the Department of Forestry and the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to replace lost trees with pine seedlings. They have held several presentations on reforestation for area students, several of whom have planted trees on a weekly basis. What a powerful example of working together to protect our natural resources for future generations.



**Above:** Students received \$500 worth of plants from Home Depot's VIVA Program. **Right:** Creativity flourishes at Trinity High School when art and biology classes create metal sculptures together.



as kids but couldn't, because then we were too young to leave the backyard! You, your fellow teachers, your students and their families will develop an understanding of the past as you become proactive about the future. Join us on this journey and help us make a difference together. □

*Gail Brown is a retired principal for Chesterfield County Public Schools. She is a lifelong learner and educator, and her teaching and administrative experiences in grades K-12 have taught her that project-based environmental programs teach science standards, promote core values, and provide exciting educational experiences for the entire community.*

skills that provide a strong foundation for future learning.

If you believe your school is making the same effort as the schools mentioned above, or you would like to help lead your school in the same direction, we hope you will form a team with your colleagues, document your efforts this school year,





Master Gardeners of Lynchburg, teachers and students continue to achieve great success at Perrymonth Elementary School.



Field work composes 85-90 percent of class requirements for Dominion's challenging Environmental Class.



At Pearson's Corner Elementary School students feel the pride of their accomplishments.

## Friends Along The Way

No one can do it alone; not schools, not the parents, not the agencies trying to help. We all need to work together to raise ethical children who respect themselves, their friends and all living things. Schools need help in providing the best possible education for their staff and students to ensure educational progress on all levels is achieved. By working with the many agencies listed on the Virginia Naturally Web site, school

administrators provide their staffs with the highest quality training to better teach science and environmental Standards of Learning. These agencies provide lesson plans, free resource materials for teachers, and gladly lend their expertise to all when invited into the schools. Agencies such as:

- ◆ Department of Game and Inland Fisheries,  
[www.dgif.virginia.gov/education/van\\_school\\_recognition.html](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/education/van_school_recognition.html)
- ◆ Department of Conservation and Recreation,  
[www.dcr.gov/edu/index.shtm](http://www.dcr.gov/edu/index.shtm):
- ◆ Department of Environmental Quality  
[www.deq.gov/edu/index.shtml](http://www.deq.gov/edu/index.shtml):
- ◆ Department of Forestry  
[www.dof.virginia.gov/edu/index.shtm](http://www.dof.virginia.gov/edu/index.shtm)

are but a few of the many agencies you will be networked with in your efforts to help our families become good stewards of the environment. They want to help. Contact them and you will be on your way.

## How to Become a Virginia Naturally School

1. Take this article to your principal (or if you are the principal to teachers/assistants you know might help) and discuss how your school either fits the profile of a Virginia Naturally School or might consider doing so in the future.
2. Survey the school campus to determine if there is an area of concern on school property that requires attention. Perhaps there is an environmental issue in the community that is an appropriate project for student involvement?
3. Form a team, select a project, and set the goals and scope of the project for the first year. Start small, with a group of students or perhaps one grade level. Expand to include all those interested as soon as possible. Remember, eventually the entire school will become involved in the project in some way.

4. Give the project a name that reflects the school's ambitions for the environment. In future years everyone will recognize the name and feel proud of your efforts.

5. Seek the support of your PTA and area businesses. Many times businesses have money earmarked for environmental education projects. If not, they will often support you with supplies and even volunteer time.

6. Send a letter home to all parents letting them know about the project and efforts to become a Virginia Naturally school. Be sure to include a form at the end of the letter seeking information about how each parent would like to help. Networking with parents on ongoing projects is one way to make sure progress will be made each and every year.

7. Select a volunteer on each grade level to document, at least monthly, the activities accomplished on that grade level. If each grade level uses the same form, it will make compiling your successes and completing the application easier.

8. Take lots of pictures. If your school requires written permission from parents to publish pictures get it at the start of the project. We want you to send us pictures on a regular basis once you are a Virginia Naturally School. Imagine the pride everyone in the community will feel when they go to the Virginia Naturally Web site and see all those smiling faces looking back at them!

9. Take advantage of local and state environmental agencies. They want to be involved. Agencies like The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Department of Water Quality, and the Department of Forestry are a wonderful resource for staff training, advice, school programs, and resource materials.

10. Meet with the environmental team often. Include parents on the team, if possible, in addition to working with the PTA. Celebrate every success. Students, faculty, and families have now taken the first step on an amazing journey. By taking these first steps together, students, faculty and families make connections with each other and the natural world. □



# Bobbin' For Bluegill

*Often it's the simple things in life, like a relaxing panfishin' trip that will remind you of just how much fun fishing can be.*

by Tee Clarkson

**I**t had been well over 15 years since I walked out of a bait shop with a box of crickets. Nonetheless, that's what I found myself doing on a warm September afternoon. As the gravel crunched under my flip flops and the hot sun beamed down on my head, I scurried quickly back to the solace of the air conditioning inside the car. I was skeptical with the warmer-than-normal weather that we could catch anything. But I will take any opportunity to fish I can get. And I got one this Sunday afternoon by asking my wife if she would like to go catch some bluegill.

I am extremely fortunate that my wife likes to fish. Let me rephrase that, she likes to catch fish. She also likes to get some sun while doing it. That means she likes to go fishing

Of the 11 species of sunfish, seven are found in Virginia. In most cases all it takes to catch a stringer of nice panfish is a long cane pole or light spinning tackle, a bright colored bobber, and a can of worms or crickets.

©Dwight Dyke



when the sun is the highest in the sky. During certain times of year, when the water temperature is cooler, this translates into fishing during the prime part of the day.

The beauty of fishing for panfish is that you can catch them almost any day and under almost any conditions. Sure, some days and times are better than others, but when things get tough, usually there is a bluegill out there that is willing to cooperate if you can get something alive and squirming in front of him. While bluegill (or "bream" as they are also called) are the most common species of panfish found in most ponds and lakes, you will often find a few pumpkinseed and redear sunfish mixed in. If you are wondering about the difference in species simply go to the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries Web page ([www.dgif.virginia.gov](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov)) and click on Fishing and then Virginia Fishes. The Web site offers information about species, preferred habitat, and about how to catch all types of fish and the best places to find each species in the state.

One of the best things about panfish, aside from the fact that they are usually in the mood to grab a bite to eat, is that they can be found in virtually every piece of water in the state. Whether it's a neighborhood pond, a giant reservoir, or a farm pond, you can rest assured it's loaded with panfish. The same can be said for moving water. Canals, rivers and creeks contain panfish as well. Usually here you will find redbreast sunfish, perhaps the toughest and most aggressive of the entire species, as well as one of the prettiest to look at.

By the time we reached the pond and I stepped out of the car, the air was so thick I thought I would be better off using a spoon and eating it like soup. In five minutes I was soaked with sweat and all I had done was get the rods out and lean them against a picnic table. My wife and I were fishing an old millpond that is loaded with bluegill, but even I doubted they would bite in this heat. As we slowly paddled away from the dock in our canoe, I knew right away where I was headed, the shade. That's where the fish would be too.

Sliding into the first cove we came to, I noticed a small patch of shade from a large rhododendron bush. Unfortunately it wasn't big enough for us to fit in while we fished, so we would have to bake in the heat for the time being. Now we needed the crickets. Tipping the box at an angle and twisting the lid to open the small hole, the first three I tried to put on the end of the hook launched into the bottom of the boat and escaped under my seat. It had been a long time since I had done this.

Finally, I managed to get one on my wife's hook and told her to cast into the shade by the bank. A nice cast placed her yellow float about 2 feet from the bank in the shade of a rhododendron. Before I could even lose another cricket to the bottom of the boat, I heard some quick winding and looked up to see her rod bent, the bobber bouncing and her line slicing toward the middle of the cove. This scene repeated itself all afternoon long. Every time I reached for a cricket to put on the end of my line, she hooked another nice bluegill. At least I knew what to get her for her birthday, her own cricket box.



©Dwight Dyke

Sunfish tend to swim in groups and like to sun themselves in shallow water over sandy lake or river bottoms. They can also be found swimming around structure such as lily pads, rocks and submerged timber.



©Dwight Dyke

Top to bottom: Bluegill (*Lepomis macrochirus*), redear or shellcracker (*Lepomis microlophus*) and redbreast (*Lepomis auratus*).



You don't have to be a master angler or spend thousands of dollars to catch a lot of panfish and have a great time doing it. A number 8 or 10 baithook at the end of the line with a split shot about 6 inches up and a bobber another 18 inches above that will catch panfish almost anywhere close to the bank in the late-spring, summer and early fall. Crickets seem to outfish most live bait, but night crawlers and mealworms are also effective. As far as artificial lures are concerned, small spinners like roostertails and beetle spins work very well, as do small grubs.

When looking for panfish in a piece of water, often you don't have to look far. They will, however, concentrate around cover like any fish. Grassy banks can be ideal places early and late in the day when panfish gravitate to the shallows in search of insects falling into the water. Corners are also excellent places to look, whether they are formed at the back of a cove or the end of a dam. When fishing moving water like rivers and creeks, look for panfish to concentrate in eddies and slower current.

By the end of the afternoon, the crickets were waning and I regretted letting the first few escape my grasp. The bluegill had become more active as the sun dropped lower in the sky, and with just two crickets left, my wife actually waited until I had baited my hook to make a cast. Very nice of her, I thought. Our bobbers landed just a few feet from each other, one yellow, one red. Neither lasted above water for more than several seconds. With those last two bluegill, and no more crickets, we were done for the day. On the way back to the dock, I realized that it had not only been a long time since I had spent an afternoon fishing crickets for bluegill, but it had been a long time since I had had this much fun fishing. □

*Tee Clarkson is an English teacher and in his spare time runs Virginia Fishing Adventures, a fishing camp for kids. For more information you can contact Tee at: [tsclarkson@virginiafishingadventures.com](mailto:tsclarkson@virginiafishingadventures.com).*





# Climbing the L

*Birdwatchers focus in on Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains to catch a glimpse of the annual fall hawk migration.*

by William Funk

“I’ve got a bird coming in just above the ridge,” says the Counter, binoculars held tight to her face, and in unison 20

magnified human eyeballs swing northward.

From over the flame-colored crest of Afton Mountain in mid-November I see the silhouette of a hawk flapping and coasting across the glaring afternoon sky, slowly, or so it seems at this distance, heading in our direction.

Against the blinding blue the distant hawk is no more than an

anonymous winged shadow, still too far off to distinguish features or colors. There are 922 avian species documented as occurring in North America but only 14 raptors (birds of prey) typically encountered here on the back porch of the Inn at Afton, high above Rockfish Gap in Nelson County, Virginia.

This helps narrow things down a bit, but then comes the hard part. To the uninitiated, soaring hawks can look much the same, but the experts gathered here today have already trimmed the list down to only two possible contenders based simply on style of flight and a vague outline.

Hawkwatching, like other forms of birding, is largely a process of elimination: a mental stripping away of potentials based on shape, flight pattern, location and time of year until the viewer is left with only a single, or at most a few, possible candidates. It takes hours of field practice to quickly determine a migrating hawk’s identity, but when the recognition is made we become privy to the hawk’s probable life history, because in correctly identifying a particular animal we assign to it a conjectured background based upon what science has revealed about the species in general.

Thus, while one hawk’s personal history is as unique and varied as one person’s from another’s, by learning how a hawk fits into its native ecosystem—its behavior, habitat and geographic range—we read into every observation an arbitrary but likely



**Above and left: Osprey and other raptors that migrate above Virginia’s mountaintops can be seen soaring at great heights. Experienced birders have learned that identifying birds by their color at such high distances is extremely hard to do. A more reliable method of identification is to recognize the silhouette of a raptor’s wing, body and tail.**

chronicle that makes each sighting much more than just another bird seen through binoculars.

Our hawk seems to struggle through the air as it advances: flap flap flap ... glide ... flap flap flap ... glide. As it comes nearer, the veteran hawkwatchers note the elongated tail, the relatively short, almost rounded wings, and the “shoulders” pulled up nearly even with the tip of the bill. Even for beginners the bird’s laborious flight behavior has already identified it as belonging to the genus *Accipiter*, one of five genera of diurnal raptor (not including turkey and black vultures, species more closely related to storks than hawks) that are annually funneled through Rockfish Gap on their great autumnal migration.



Osprey ©John R. Ford



# Fast + Light

Accipiters are forest dwellers, hunting birds and small mammals by ambush and a lightning pursuit through branches and brush. The short, broad wings are ideal for sudden changes of direction and brief, powered charges while the long tail acts as a rudder and stabilizer, allowing these hawks to snake through tangled undergrowth with single-minded relentlessness.

As there are only three species of accipiter occurring in the U.S., the bird we've been watching can only be a goshawk, Cooper's hawk or sharp-shinned hawk. Goshawks are big hawks, nearly the size of redtails, and hunt snowshoe hare, grouse and ptarmigan in the northern forests.

They are extremely rare vagrants through Rockfish Gap.

Cooper's hawks are crow-sized bird and squirrel killers, and like the smaller sharp-shinned hawk the adults are slate blue above and peppered with rusty-red scales on a soft white breast; in juvenile birds of both species the breast is marked with thick chocolaty stripes. Cooper's hawks are fairly common migrants in October and early November.

The jay-sized sharp-shinned hawk looks much like the Cooper's, and only close and learned observation can discern the square-tipped tail and forward-swept shoulders of the sharpie. To further complicate identification accipiters are sexually



©Bill Lea

**Top and left: The Cooper's hawk is called an accipiter and is different from the more common red-tailed and red-shouldered hawk. It is a fast, agile flyer in flight and hunts frequently on the wing taking other small birds while in flight. In the air its short, rounded wings and long tail help to identify it. Above: Diminutive in size, the sparrow hawk is often referred to as a kestrel. It feeds primarily on small mammals and builds its nest in natural tree, rock and bank cavities and even in old woodpecker holes.**

dimorphous, the male sometimes being a third smaller than the female. Differentiating a male Cooper's from a female sharp-shinned at 2,500 feet can stymie even the most experienced observers, which is why "Unidentified Accipiter" is a valid choice on the Counter's daily tally sheet.

The bird in my lenses has the sharp angular tail of *Accipiter striatus*, the sharp-shinned hawk, and as I watch it grows larger and larger until suddenly it is among us, skimming less than 50 feet above our heads in its determined race to the south. The



©Rob and Ann Simpson





crowd gasps and grins as the close range allows us to greedily take in details: straight barred tail alternating blue and black and terminating in a band of brilliant white; creamy breast densely speckled with orange; inky cap hooding bright and unforgiving red eyes. Grim determination is what is primarily evoked as the hawk cocks its head to give his audience an ephemeral glance before rushing by us and forever out of sight.

Birds of prey are not generally known for having much sense of humor...unlike, say, crows, though I have seen red-tailed hawks and ravens playing at aerial tag. But accipiters seem to me the most deadly earnest of all birds of prey, utterly focused on the hunt and so entirely creatures of their marvelous reflexes that any close association, even over the long term, can be dangerous. I once knew a falconer who said that while goshawks, especially juveniles, were sometimes capable of being semi-tamed enough to keep their killing fury turned toward targeted game instead of their handlers, sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks, caught wild, were ordinarily beyond even rudimentary domestication, their hair-trigger instincts and electric nerve endings posing a constant danger to the falconer's hands, face and eyes.

It looks to be a lot of work to be an accipiter. Built for brief, high-speed pursuits between tree trunks and through bushes, the sharp-shinned hawk and its kin appear ill-suited to the high-altitude strains of migration.

Better adapted are the members of genus *Buteo*, the long-winged, short-tailed windmasters whose expertise at finding and riding thermals is rivaled only by the eagles. As our sharpie disappears over the hotel roof someone has spotted another bird climbing over the ridge. "Buteo," intones the Counter, having observed the capacious wings spread at full soar as the bird rides the warm air rising over the mountainside in slowly ascending spirals, thick primary feathers rigidly extended like the fingers of a jazz pianist. We begin

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Above and top right: The red-tailed hawk or, as some call the chicken hawk, is one of the most easily recognized of the raptors in Virginia. It's often seen gliding gracefully high above the countryside and along highways, or perched high in a tree surveying the landscape for its next meal. In the air it can be identified by its large, rounded wings and fanned out tail.





©Brenda Tekin

to mentally tick off the possibilities, as the hawk swings nearer.

At the invisible peak of its spiraling tower of air the buteo banks, pulls its wings in slightly and, joined now by a couple of turkey vultures with red heads and gleaming ivory bills, commences a long, shallow glide along the mountain's shoulder, high over the clamorous flotsam of I-64, down the chute of Rockfish Gap and toward its assembled admirers.

By now we see the milky white

tail tilting to maximize every whiff of updraft. A newcomer shouts "Red-tail!" as the powerful hawk drifts past, passing at a low angle and honoring us with a brief, indifferent stare.

Red-tailed hawks are archetypal buteos with long, broad wings, stocky tails and an overall impression of stoic strength. As this one silently coasts by above our heads we take in the charcoal borders highlighting its pale wings, the ruddy tail now tightly closed, and the shoulders swung for-



©Rob and Ann Simpson

Like a smaller version of the Cooper's hawk, the sharp-shinned hawk is also an accipiter. Unlike the Cooper's hawk, sharp-shins prefer more coniferous forests for nesting, and are more commonly found in the mountains and upper piedmont. Sharp-shinned hawks have excellent eyesight and superior flying skills, as do most raptors, which give them the upper hand when hunting for food.

throat and belly, the black-specked cummerbund, the flat brown back and head and, in stray glimpses as the bird pitches and turns, a rust-red

ward in an apparently effortless concentration on the annihilation of distance.

The "redtail" is the most populous buteo species in North America and generally migrates through Rockfish Gap in November, having been preceded weeks before by a tidal flood of broadwing hawks, smaller buteos that often form swirling "kettles" of sometimes hundreds or even thousands of birds, pulsing and spinning around ther-

mal columns in a feathered cyclone. Broadwings are blunt-winged forest buteos, slightly larger than a crow, whose taste is for the cold-blooded: snakes, frogs, toads and insects. They come through in great swarms timed to maximize the last abundance of their warm weather prey, then are whirled off to Latin America in a few short weeks.

Many local redtails stay in Virginia all winter long, but most of the more northerly-based migrants take advantage of the opportunity to leave their summer homes before prey becomes scarce. An adaptable hawk, the redtail feasts on everything from spiders and earthworms to groundhogs and carrion. I've seen a single red-tailed hawk chase a dozen vultures, both turkey and black, from the carcass of a freshly butchered deer, and last summer witnessed a redtail struggling to take off with a bucking 5-foot corn snake in its talons.



©John R. Ford

The unmistakable white head and tail feathers of an adult bald eagle make it easy to identify. Eagle populations have been steadily increasing throughout Virginia over the past 25 years. One of the largest concentrations of bald eagles in the state is along the James River, near Hopewell.

Redtails are the most common late fall migrant at Rockfish Gap and at first I mistake the two buteos now circling overhead for members of the same species, but the bold banding on the longish tails and the narrow,



sweeping wings with the curious opaque half-moons on the outer edges gives the newcomers away as something else entirely: red-shouldered hawks.

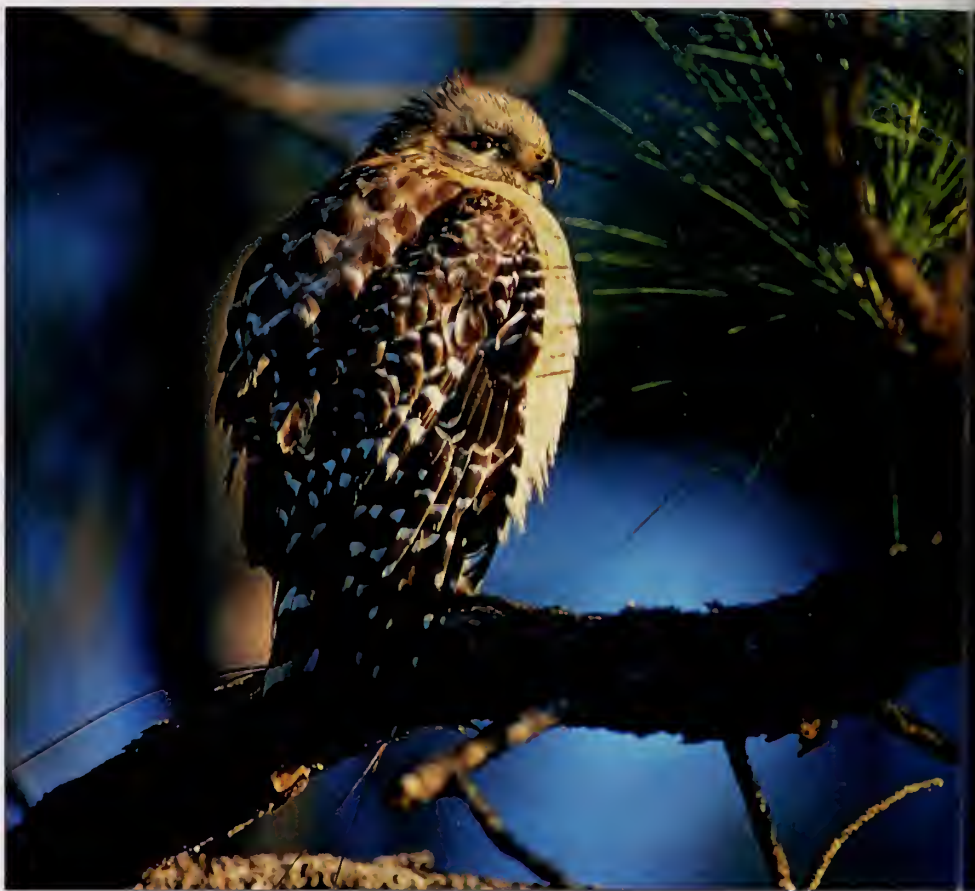
The red-shouldered is a swamp hawk, at home in streamside forests and marshlands, hunting snakes and frogs in the summer and small mammals in cooler months. A gorgeous raptor, *Buteo lineatus* has a black-and-white checkered back with ruddy shoulders and, in adults, a luminous coral breast and belly. Gliding high above, heading toward warmer climes, the two hawks give us a resplendent display during their momentary transit, chests glowing fiercely as they slip over the southeastern hills like twin sunsets.

All eyes being fixed on this spectacle we fail to notice two more sharpies until they're already overhead and then, at eye level and only a few dozen yards out, a burning dart of red, white and blue comes whickering past with sharp wings chopping the air and long pointed tail trailing like a comet's.

It is a male American kestrel, a vibrant foot-long falcon the size of a killdeer and the smallest falcon in North America; like the rest of its kin, it is wasting no time in getting to its destination. While they will use updrafts and thermals when convenient, falcons are not as dependent upon them as are buteos and accipiters, relying primarily on their untiring powered flight to slice through the wind.

There are three species of falcon that may be encountered at Rockfish Gap: the kestrel, the slightly larger merlin, and the celebrated peregrine, globetrotting exemplar of the falcon clan. Kestrels hunt rodents and large insects from trees and powerlines, and will also take amphibians and catch small birds and bats on the wing.

The dusky merlin is the bane of migrating shorebirds, exacting a seasonal toll on small-to-medium plovers and sandpipers as they shadow flocks down the coasts like wolves trailing caribou herds. Powerful and deadly efficient hunters, merlins also hunt songbirds and



**Slightly smaller than a red-tailed hawk and much darker in color, the red-shouldered hawk is more commonly seen in low-lying areas. It feeds primarily on small mammals, but also takes many reptiles, amphibians and even insects. Like the red-tail, the red-shouldered hawk is identified by its broad body, large wings and broad tail feathers. It is also very vocal and makes a very loud and sharp "keeyuur, keeyuur" cry.**

small mammals and will attack human intruders on their nesting territory.

The world-wandering *Falco peregrinus*, sublime creature of myth and legend, deigns only to feed on medium to large birds it has knocked out of the sky with its dive-bombing attacks, striking ducks, pigeons, even geese and cranes with its oversized feet at speeds of up to and perhaps over 200 miles per hour. The rare occurrence of a peregrine at the hawk-watch, streaking serenely past on scythe-like wings, is an occasion for stunned silence among newcomers and veterans alike.

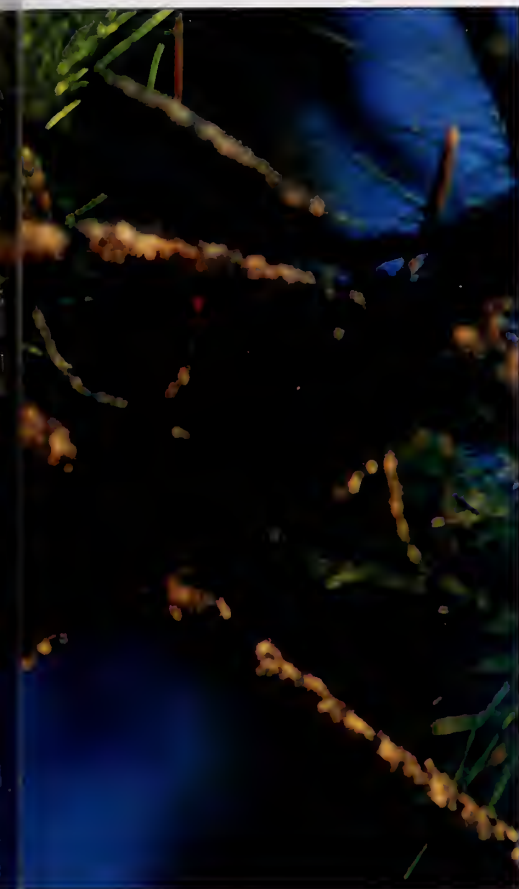
Our kestrel disappeared as suddenly as it came, and with approach-



ing evening comes a lull in the flow of migrants. Watchers chat about recent sightings while novices query the vets for identification tips and tales of record high-number days.

Raptors are generally big birds and they depend on the lay of the land for long-distance travel. By following one another along ridges and mountainsides where the winds form warm, rising updrafts, hawks are able to save energy and reduce the need for hunting en route to their wintering grounds. In Virginia, at places like Rockfish Gap, Snicker's





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©Brenda Tekin

**Peregrine falcons are incredibly fast flyers. They are capable of diving at speeds of up to 200 mph in pursuit of prey. Peregrines are streamlined in appearance with long, pointed wings, a large head and a long tail that tapers to the tip.**

Gap and Harvey's Knob, the natural contours of mountain chain and valley create topographic bottlenecks where birds from several migratory paths are channeled together as they seek the most obliging wind currents.

At these staging areas, in times mercifully past, restless killers calling themselves "sportsmen" would reg-

ularly gather for an afternoon's hawk-shooting, senselessly destroying thousands of migrating raptors at sites like Hawk Mountain, Pennsylvania, a location now dedicated to the preservation of wild hawks and a premier destination for hawkwatchers worldwide.

Rockfish Gap is hardly of the eminence of places like Hawk Mountain, Cape May Point in New Jersey or Ontario's Point Pelee, unrivaled sites where tens of thousands of hawks can breeze through in a few weeks, but its mountainous geography has made it an excellent destination for hawkwatchers in central Virginia, a fact recognized by the Commonwealth in its inclusion of Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch as part of the Thomas Jefferson Loop (Mountain Phase) of Virginia's statewide Birding and Wildlife Trail.

At the top of the hour the Counter checks her electronic weather wizard and carefully enters the current wind speed and direction, temperature, humidity, barometric pressure, cloud cover and visibility. This information, along with an hourly tally of all hawks observed today, will be entered into the national database of the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA) and used to extrapolate the overall population status of the 14 raptor species regularly reported at Rockfish Gap.

I talk with some of the other watchers, who mostly live in Albemarle, Nelson and Augusta counties. For dedicated regulars the season from late August to early December is a time to wrap the whole year around, a brief meshing of their own lives with those of some of nature's most splendid creatures.

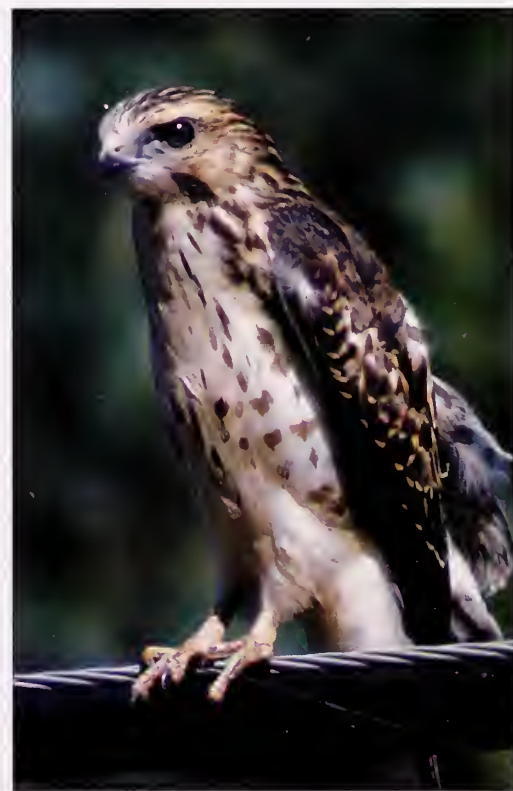
The small crowd gathered here this Saturday afternoon is of dissimilar backgrounds but united by a commonly held, largely indefinable, almost atavistic admiration for birds of prey. Insurance salesmen stand shoulder to shoulder with county employees, farmers share pointers with adjunct professors, and the timid novice is welcomed to the show by seasoned experts. A common love for these heraldic birds has

drawn people from throughout the region to share in a magical moment that could even now be gathering strength behind yonder mountain ridge, some distant atmospheric event hurtling thousands of raptors southward in a strategic withdrawal from onrushing winter.

Why go hawkwatching? The most dedicated will try to tell you why they sweat through summer and brave the numbing winds of winter after often distant glimpses of migrating birds, but the explanations always seem perfunctory, rote, telling not the whole tale.

The birds' objective beauty and grace, certainly, is a recurrent factor—the elegant edging of chiseled wings against an oceanic sky, closer flashes of color, pattern, form, an overall impression of reserved majesty that trails the sky-crossing hawk like an angel's grace.

But something closer yet to the mute heart of the hawkwatcher drives those most deeply obsessed with this yearly pageant to come, again and again, and stand straining



©Rob and Ann Simpson

**An immature broad-winged hawk sits patiently scanning the horizon waiting for any movement to alert it to its next meal.**



to see something that may not appear today, or tomorrow, or the next day. A kind of personal identification seems to be at hand, a yearning to be one with something as near to earthly transcendence as the human mind can be made to perceive.

The Counter here today, as on most every weekend of the season for the past 11 years, is Brenda Tekin of Charlottesville. Previously unfamiliar with hawks, Brenda had learned of nearby Rockfish Gap Hawkwatch from her local bird club, and she well remembers her first day.

"Call it beginner's luck," she says. "Just as I showed up on a sunny September afternoon a stream of hawks rolled in and began to kettle low in the sky, so close that at times I thought I could just reach out and touch them. I was mesmerized at this spectacular sight. The experienced hawkwatchers told me that the swirling mass of birds I was seeing were broad-winged hawks, a species I never even knew existed before that day. Then a second group flowed in next to the first and the sky was filled! It was at that defining moment that I knew I had succumbed to hawkwatching."

Since 1999 Brenda has been HMANA Coordinator for Rockfish Gap and is recognized as an authority on hawk identification, the person newcomers approach when making their first tentative guesses. Having been to the bigger hawkwatches I've seen some of the jaded regulars display a sort of genteel contempt for beginners, forgetting that they themselves had once been equally ignorant. Brenda and the other pros at Rockfish Gap—John Irvine, Jr., Bill Gallagher, and YuLee Lerner (the celebrated "Bird Lady of Staunton"), among others—are unceasingly considerate toward those with even the most mundane questions ("Hey, what's that big red-necked turkey-like buzzard out there?").

"To those new to hawkwatching an established hawkwatch can be a great learning resource," says Brenda. "During those first years at Rockfish Gap I was always appreciative of the more experienced individuals

who were so patient in answering my countless questions. I think I speak for a lot of folks at the hawkwatch in saying that once your foot hits the parking lot pavement you've arrived at a place where you can leave all your troubles behind."

The sun is dying in the west. We've had a good afternoon—four species of raptor have been encountered, enjoyed and tabulated. No eagles this time, no harriers, ospreys or goshawks, but we know they're out there, silently soaring in the fading air of autumn, following the same ridges and valleys their ancestors have traced for untold millennia.

Brenda claims to love raptors for their "wild boldness," as sound a reason as any. Few can successfully sum up the reasons why they spend each fall pursuing birds they will never hold in

the hand, birds usually seen through a considerable distance and the artificial intermediary of binoculars. There must be something exceptional about hawks, something in their controlled savagery and indomitable freedom which calls out to a part of us long buried in the wearying nullity of industrial civilization, something that speaks, perhaps, to our own unconquerable animal selves. ■

*William H. Funk is a conservation writer in the Shenandoah Valley. He may be contacted at [williamfunk3@verizon.net](mailto:williamfunk3@verizon.net).*

**Participants in the Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch help to provide vital information that is recorded into a national database of hawk migrations, which is then used to monitor the population status of these magnificent birds around the country.**





A full-page photograph of a hunter in camouflage gear sitting in a forest. The hunter is wearing a hat and has a beard, and is holding a shotgun. A bright orange band is wrapped around a tree trunk next to him. The forest floor is covered in pine needles and fallen leaves.

# A Really Bright Idea!

*Blaze Orange—  
a fashion statement that  
not only looks good, but  
could save your life.*

by Bruce Ingram

I had no sooner debarked from my Jeep when I heard four different gobblers sound off about 200 yards away on my Craig County land. Thrilled with my good fortune in the pre-dawn murk on the mountain, I quickly ran about 100 yards and set up. Twenty minutes later after several more rounds of gobbling, the toms flew down onto a mountainside in the Jefferson National Forest, which borders my property.

I too then moved into the national forest, setting up on a flat to the right of the mountainside where I guessed the quartet had assembled. After 15 minutes or so of verbal exchanges between the gobblers and me, in they came. I'm not one to attempt to gauge body size and beard length among a group of similar size birds, so I shot the first one that came within 30 yards.

Then I began the three-step ritual that I always perform after killing either a spring gobbler or a fall turkey. Kneeling over the bird, I donned a



blaze orange cap that I keep in a day-pack, unloaded my Remington 1100 12-gauge, and tagged the tom. For safety's sake, when I am about to carry a turkey out of the woods, I always feel more secure if I at least have on the brightly colored headgear. And, obviously, there is no point (given Virginia's one bird per day limit both spring and fall) of having shells in a shotgun after that limit has been reached.

Next, I walked back onto my property and began heading toward the vehicle. And that's when I saw a man quickly run behind a tree. Apparently, the individual had been walking through my property (perhaps accessing it from the national forest), attracted by both the sounds

slipped between a row of posted signs back into the national forest.

That occasion has been one of many when I was very, very glad that I had been wearing blaze orange when legally I didn't have to. I realize that some sportsmen will proclaim that they shouldn't have to be expected to wear blaze orange after they kill a turkey, just because unsportsman-like characters occasionally roam the woods. And I agree that legally Virginia's sportsmen should not be required to do so. All I am suggesting is that donning the orange in a wide variety of circumstances just makes good sense and helps protect us from those that don't have, well, good sense.

### Turkey Hunting Situations

After killing a fall or spring turkey is not the only time when I wear blaze orange when afield for this big game animal. I put on that same blaze orange cap when I set out (or retrieve) decoys either in the fall or spring. Many Old Dominion spring hunters like to position a jake and several hens about 20 yards in front of them. The theory is, and I recognize its validity as well, that a long-beard will set eyes on the shortbeard and become outraged that the jake is about to mate with "his" hens.

But that period when we are setting out those decoys offers the potential for danger—specifically that time frame when we are kneeling beside the dekes and affixing them to stakes. Believe me, wearing some blaze orange then can truly relieve stress and provide a measure of safety.

I also occasionally employ decoys during the fall season. For example during opening week of the early turkey season this past autumn, I called in and killed a jenny that had come within 5 yards of a fake hen. I had busted up a flock earlier and really believe that the lone decoy that morning helped seal the deal. And once again before positioning the decoy and after the shot, I put on my trusty blaze orange hat.

Another situation where I don the cap is when I am walking

through the woods in both spring and fall, especially if I feel that other hunters may be present on this particular parcel of public or private land. Now I know that some hunters will argue that the orange will make them more visible to turkeys and possibly spook them. My response is that a turkey's sense of hearing is so superior to ours that a bird is more likely to hear us coming well beforehand. And that same bird and its sharp eyesight is also just as likely to espy our camouflaged moving form as our camouflaged moving form adorned with a blaze orange cap.

### Deer Hunting Situations

According to Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries



Mark and Elaine Ingram admire a fall bird killed in Botetourt County. After killing a fall or spring turkey, Virginia's sportsmen and women should consider donning at least a blaze orange hat.

of the four gobblers and my calling. Apparently he had also glimpsed me, fully realized he was trespassing, and attempted to hide.

Our eyes then locked, and the "gentleman" came out from around his tree, muttered something about the public land and private land boundaries being vague, and then



Here a hunter drags a deer out of the Big Survey WMA during late muzzleloader season. When moving about and especially when dragging or carrying other game, is a logical time for hunters to be sporting blaze orange.

(VDGIF) regulations, "blaze orange is not required during the muzzleloading deer seasons." But this is another time period when I always wear orange. The early muzzleloader season has become increasingly popular (as well it should for this is a marvelous time to pursue whitetails) over the past 15 years with more and



more Commonwealth sportsmen afield then.

The added safety of wearing blaze orange gives us a better chance of silently letting other smokepolers know that we are in the woods. And I strongly recommend that hunters wear an orange vest and/or hat when dragging a deer out of the woods during the muzzleloader seasons.

Another situation when I sport a blaze orange hat during the muzzleloader season is when I bowhunt during this time period. For example, this past season I decided that I wanted to undertake the challenge of occasionally bowhunting during the early smokepole season. One morning I positioned a portable on a Bote-

was really glad to have had on a blaze orange hat that would have helped the other hunter distinguish my form should he have come any closer to my position. Researchers have proved that deer aren't spooked by blaze orange, so my wearing it had no effect on my success or failure that morning.

Finally, some Virginians like to deploy deer decoys during the bow and muzzleloader seasons. These are other obvious situations for wearing some orange.

### Small Game Hunting Situations

The months of September and January are my favorite periods to

game seasons. Dressing in this bright hue lets other sportsmen know that a human is present and helps insure that hunters (in the previous case dove hunters) won't send forth a volley of No. 7½ shot our way.

I also like to sport orange when grouse, rabbit or quail hunting. January is a traditional month for the Old Dominion's small game fans to take to the woods and fields. At that time of the year, grouse and rabbits especially dwell in extremely thick cover. If two orange-clad buddies are making their way through an overgrown copse—trailing behind bird dogs or beagles—the fact that both individuals are blazing brightly helps not only the duo to hunt safely but also to insure that one of them does not drift



©Bruce Ingram

**If you like pursuing small game, such as grouse and rabbits, or deer during muzzleloader season, the wisdom that "it's better to be safe than sorry" is a precaution that everyone can live with.**

tourt County farm where I have permission to hunt.

Shortly after daybreak, I heard a hunter bust up and then shoot at a flock of turkeys that were located on another landowner's property just behind my stand. I was obviously hunting legally and so was the other individual. But most emphatically, I

squirrel hunt and are also logical times to wear blaze orange, although we legally don't have to. For instance, last September I was hunting squirrels on a Botetourt County farm that is also popular with dove hunters. I was just finishing squirrel hunting when a group of dove enthusiasts arrived at the property. I'm sure they observed my blaze orange hat bobbing across the landscape—and I'm glad they did.

No one is ever going to mistake a human for a squirrel, that's not the point of wearing orange during small

too far out in front of the other and possibly prematurely spook game.

It may be trite to say that hunting safety is the responsibility of all sportsmen, but the statement is true, nevertheless. Being afield with a blaze orange cap and/or vest just makes good sense—even when legally we aren't required to do so. □

*Bruce Ingram is the author of the following books: The James River Guide, The New River Guide, and The Shenandoah/Rappahannock Rivers Guide. To obtain a copy, contact Ingram at P.O. Box 429, Fincastle, VA 24090.*



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# Cranking It Up A Notch

story and photos by Ken Perrotte

**R**on Henson and his 10-year-old son Ronnie sat in their comfortable ground blind, peering through the windows at a Caroline County soybean field in a family quest for white-tailed deer last October.

A crossbow rested across the elder Henson's lap.

Ronnie, at 4-foot, 6-inches tall, doesn't have the stature yet to draw a compound bow capable of deer hunting, but under his dad's tutelage, he quickly became proficient at making close-in shots with the crossbow.

The agreement in the blind called for Ronnie to have all shots at 20 yards or less, with Ron handling the bow for shots out to 40 yards.

**New crossbow hunting opportunities prove to be right on target.**

While the Hensons spent many enjoyable afternoons and early evenings hunting last fall, any deer they saw remained out of range. Still, their new ability to take up a crossbow let both share the hunt and the memories that come from the experience.

Only certifiably disabled hunters were eligible to hunt with crossbows in Virginia prior to last year. The 2005 legislation proposing that all hunters should be able to use crossbows was

met with dire warnings about negative impacts this archery tool would have on game populations, safety and illegal activity.

Internet traffic, hunt club scuttlebutt, and more spread a wide array of information and misinformation about the crossbow's maximum effective range and killing power. Some archery "purists" who also disdain compound bows and sophisticated sights feared loudly that wider acceptability of crossbows would

**Ron Henson and his son Ronnie found the crossbow a good hunting tool that both could manage while hunting from a ground blind. The 10-year-old was offered first crank at any deer coming within 20 yards and the pair used laser rangefinders to pinpoint distances.**



further signal the demise of deer hunting as they had come to know and love it.

Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) officials invested considerable time educating hunters about the crossbow legislation after the General Assembly approved legislation allowing everyone to use it for hunting.

Meetings and seminars were staged around the Old Dominion, including events at sportsman shows. Representatives from crossbow manufacturers and VDGIF officials, including Wildlife Division Director Bob Duncan, were on hand at the seminars to explain bow operations and to debunk misconceptions.

Johnny Grace, of Parker Compound Bows, which is located in Mint Spring, Va., and makes all types of bows, said common complaints were that crossbows are too efficient, too easy to shoot, and will kill too many deer.

"The same thing was said about compound bows when they were introduced," Grace said.

Grace said he believes adding the



crossbow to every hunter's range of options will result in a positive effect on recruiting and retaining active participants in bowhunting.

"Bowhunting with traditional or compound bows has strong participation until about age 45, then drops.

**Above:** Crossbow shooters must be careful when loading a bolt since the bow is already in the cocked position. **Below:** Ten-year-old Ronnie Henson uses a shooting rest to steady his aim while practicing with a crossbow under the watchful eye of his father Ron.







Until last deer season, only hunters with a certified medical limitation were allowed to hunt using crossbows.

### Crossbow Contacts

- **Parker Compound Bows:** This Virginia company makes bows in 100 to 150-pound draw weights. Call (540) 337-5426 or see [www.parkerbows.com](http://www.parkerbows.com).
- **Barnett Crossbows:** This company specializes in crossbows and even makes crossbow pistols. See [www.barnettcrossbows.com](http://www.barnettcrossbows.com) for information.
- **Darton Archery:** Darton manufactures a number of crossbows under its Great Lakes Crossbow brand. Call 989-728-4231 or see [www.dartonarchery.com](http://www.dartonarchery.com).
- **Horton Manufacturing:** Horton is an Ohio company that specializes in crossbows, making more than 10 different models, with draw weights from 80 to 200 pounds. Call 800/551-7486 or see [www.crossbow.com](http://www.crossbow.com).
- **PSE (Precision Shooting Equipment):** Although better known for their compound bows, Arizona's PSE makes three different crossbows. See [www.pse-archery.com](http://www.pse-archery.com).
- **Aftershock Archery:** Crossbow certified broadheads. See [www.aftershockarchery.com](http://www.aftershockarchery.com) or call 248/668-0874 or e-mail [info@aftershockarchery.com](mailto:info@aftershockarchery.com)

### Disabled Archer Resources

Crossbows remain excellent hunting tools for disabled archers, with a variety of accessories available to enable people with limited physical abilities to load, cock and fire the bow, often from a wheelchair. The groups below can help with specific information about crossbow options.

- **Physically Challenged Bowhunters of America, Inc.:** Call 742/668-7439 or 785/637-5421, or see [www.pcba-inc.org](http://www.pcba-inc.org).
- **Paralyzed Veterans of America:** Call 800 424-8200 or see [www.pva.org](http://www.pva.org).
- **United Federation of Disabled Archers:** Call 320/634-3660 or see [www.uffdaclub.com](http://www.uffdaclub.com).

### License Information

If a crossbow is used during any Virginia archery season (including the urban archery season) a hunter must have a crossbow license, which costs \$17 for residents and \$30 for non-residents plus the \$1.00 agent fee. Hunters using a crossbow during the general firearms season do not need a crossbow license (just as there is no requirement for a person to have an archery license if using conventional archery equipment during the firearms season). A crossbow must be capable of propelling a broadhead arrow at least 125 yards. Scopes are allowed. ■

It really nosedives after age 55. Crossbow hunters regularly carry on to almost 65," Grace said.

"We have heard from other states that crossbows are very user-friendly for older deer hunters. We consider this a big positive," noted Matt Knox, deer program supervisor for the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, adding there is still uncertainty about how much they will factor in recruiting youngsters to hunting.

### 14,500 Crossbow Licenses

According to preliminary license sale numbers provided by Knox, about 58,000 resident archery licenses are sold annually. Last year, ap-



**Hunter Craig Simpson shows the nice buck he took with his crossbow. Crossbows make excellent hunting tools for disabled archers with a number of devices designed to make the bow's operation easier.**

proximately 14,500 crossbow licenses were sold, along with 51,500 resident archery licenses, an overall increase of about 7,000 licenses.

Knox surmises the license numbers mean about 7,000 archers, or 12 percent, transitioned to crossbows and about 7,000 "new" hunters began hunting during the archery seasons.

Accidents involving crossbow hunters were typically not related to the method of hunting, but due to the seemingly perennial problem of carelessness by hunters using tree stands.

One type of usually minor crossbow accident—hitting fingers ex-



tended higher than the top edge of the fore end grip with the bowstring upon release—are not recorded. Then again, neither are compound bowstring accidents where the shooter's inside forearm is grazed and stung by a released string.

Still, this appears to be a common mistake with novice crossbow shooters. Many newcomers to this form of archery have wondered why some type of protective flange couldn't be designed to prevent fingers from creeping above the shooting plane.

### Minimal Deer Harvest Impact Overall

The deer harvest tally from the first season of expanded crossbow

hunting seems to show a largely minimal impact overall.

Knox noted that more than 108,000 deer were checked by telephone last season. Of these 10,368 were killed with bow and 3,212 with crossbows. In 2004, when only disabled hunters could use crossbows, 802 deer were taken in this fashion. While Knox expected a drop from 2004's total of 221,492 deer taken, he expected slight increases in the total archery kill, primarily due to the addition of crossbows.

"I have maintained all along that crossbows will not have a major impact," Knox said. "Historically, archers have taken less than 10 percent of the total deer kill; with crossbows, this may go up to about 15 percent."

Knox added that some people refute his hypothesis about the impact of crossbows on deer harvest; using Ohio's deer kill numbers as an example. But, he explains this comparison is basically of the apples and oranges variety since Virginia has a liberal general firearms season while Ohio has a relatively short firearms season, just one week for shotguns and one week for muzzleloaders.

"If I lived in a state that only had about a week of shotgun-only firearms deer hunting and four months of crossbow hunting, I would be a crossbow deer hunter too," he said. Knox also believes crossbows will help in urban deer management situations. The crossbow option was readily accepted by the organized



Above: Hunter and author, Ken Perrotte, used a crossbow to take a mature doe whose curiosity led it straight to a scent wick sprayed with a deer urine scent. Right: The popularity of hunting with crossbows is growing as several states have recently made using them a part of their hunting seasons.



©photo courtesy of Ottie Snyder, Horton Manufacturing

archery hunting group "Suburban Whitetail Management of Northern Virginia," which works with businesses and landowners to control burgeoning deer populations in urban and suburban areas.

In a state such as Virginia where stabilizing or even reducing the deer herd size in some areas is a management objective, Knox sees the crossbow as a positive tool.

"Crossbows will have provided a quality recreational experience for potentially thousands of new hunters during the archery seasons and in a small way, hopefully it will have helped us control Virginia's deer herd," he said. □

*Ken Perrotte is a writer and outdoor columnist for the Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star and lives in King George County.*





## Crossbow Design Dates to Medieval Times

by Ken Perrotte

A crossbow, for those unfamiliar with the design, looks somewhat like a traditional bow mounted horizontally across a rifle platform. Some researchers trace its design back to the Third Century.

The crossbow was a military weapon useful in siege warfare, especially in pre-Renaissance years. For combat in open fields, though, the faster shooting longbow or recurve designs were the better choices.

The basic operating premise is the same as it was 1,000 years ago. Shooters load the arrows (called bolts) and cock the string back with a latch. If physically able, they then snug their shoulder into the stock of the device, take aim, and squeeze a trigger to release the bolt.

Today's sporting crossbows can be built with either a recurve style bow or a compound style bow with high performance cams. They typically weigh between 5.5 and 9 pounds

and can have draw weights between 100 and 200 pounds. The 150-pound draw weight is a popular deer hunting weight.

### Many Considerations

Entering the world of hunting with a crossbow can be challenging, with numerous types of bows, arrows, accessories and other factors to consider.

An attractive feature of crossbows is that they can employ precise aiming tools, such as non-magnifying scopes with "red dot" technology. For example, in a three-dot aiming scheme, the bottom dot could be "zeroed" at 20 yards, with the middle dot at 30 yards and the top dot at 40 yards.

Accurate arrow placement is critical to ethical bowhunting and the crossbow's aiming potential can increase the chances of making quality, humane shots. Bow manufacturers, though, quickly point out that having a scope doesn't negate the need for practice. Hunters need to invest time at the shooting range to ensure they can confidently handle the bow under a variety of conditions.

The hunter has to realize a crossbow is a single shot tool, sort of like a muzzleloading rifle, especially when hunting from a treestand. When hunting with a compound bow, a missed shot sometimes doesn't scatter deer out of range. Skilled archers can often nock another arrow and attempt a second shot. With a crossbow, however, it is impossible to reload in a treestand without nearby deer seeing your movement. Plus, cocking a crossbow in a treestand is a dangerous act against which virtually all manufacturers and hunting safety experts advise.

The positive tradeoff for crossbow hunters is that it is often easier, especially for experienced rifle or shotgun shooters, to shoulder and aim the bow as game approaches. Plus, a crossbow is already locked and cocked with no concerns about drawing and holding a bow.

Some perceive this as the cross-

bow hunter's "unfair" advantage. Learning how and when to draw a compound or traditional stickbow on deer in close quarters is a skill frequently learned by trial and error. Hunters often spook a number of animals before figuring out when to draw the bow and when to hold motionless.

Practicing with a 150-pound draw weight crossbow at ranges between 20 and 40 yards, it became apparent that the bolt (arrow) flight is similar to that of my compound bow set at 60 pounds of draw weight.

Johnny Grace of Parker Compound Bows in Mint Spring, Va., says the bolt fired from such a bow will drop about 5 inches between the distances of 20 and 30 yards. Kinetic energy and trajectory really tail off at 40 yards, yet you still hear some promulgate the myth that crossbow hunters will be routinely killing deer at rifled shotgun slug distances.

Crossbows can generate bolt speed a little faster than 300 feet per second, but compound bows can launch similarly fast arrows. With precise knowledge of trajectory at long distance, archers can sometimes drop an arrow in on long-range targets, just as rifle shooters can sometimes make 500-yard shots. Hunters should learn their limits and, ideally, stick with ethical shots. Most crossbow hunters will tell you 30 to 40 yards is their maximum shooting range when hunting.

Crossbow bolts are usually tipped with broadheads weighing at least 125 grains. Mechanical broadheads, designed for crossbow use, that open on contact with the target are favored as they tend to fly the truest compared to the field points with which most archers practice.

Sitting in a treestand last October, I used a Parker crossbow with a red dot site to fire a bolt tipped with a 125-grain Aftershock "Tremor" mechanical broadhead at a doe 25 yards away. The shot placement was perfectly on the mark and the doe quickly fell with as clean a kill as I've ever made on a deer. ■





# Journal

## 2006 Outdoor Calendar of Events

**September 30:** *Fly Fishing Workshop* at Riven Rock Park in Harrisonburg. For more information call 804-367-6778.

**October 14:** *Family Fishing Workshop* at Bear Creek Lake State Park in Cumberland County. For more information call 804-367-6778 □

### Fishing With Pop Pop



Talking about "Bobbin' For Bluegill." How about this 11-inch, 1½-pound bluegill caught in The Meadows Lake in Warrenton, by 8-

year-old Caitlin Wagner who attends Wakefield School in Plains. Thanks to her grandfather "Pop Pop," who took the time to teach her how to fish, and continues to take her fishing every chance he gets, Caitlin has become a real pro. Not only does she love everything about fishing, including baiting her own hook, Caitlin loves eating what she catches. When it comes to bluegill she recommends pan-frying them with a light dusting of cornmeal. Now that sounds like a recipe everybody should try for living the good life. □



### Outdoor Classics

*Bush Pilot Angler: A Memoir*  
by Lee Wulff  
2000 Down East Books/Silver Quill Press  
ISBN: 0-89272-480-3  
Hardcover with black and white photographs

This is the rich memoir of legendary angler and fisheries conservationist Lee Wulff who died in 1991, at the ripe age of 86. With a background in civil engineering, advertising and art, Wulff was a modern renaissance man, who in the fourth decade of his life pioneered fishing and sporting camps in remote regions of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Three aspects of Wulff's life make *Bush Pilot Angler* a particularly rewarding read: inventiveness, a

practical reverence for his beloved Atlantic salmon, and the ability to reinvent himself when circumstances became altered. Wulff could smell change in the air and he adjusted his methods accordingly. Needing reliable, swift transportation to carry his "sports" to his isolated fishing camps, he cut a film deal with Piper Aircraft and became the proud owner of a J3 Cub he named "Yellow Bird," earning a pilot's license at age 42.

When Wulff began to see declines in the health and numbers of Atlantic salmon and brook trout, he began initiatives to establish catch limits and to promote catch and release angling. Though at the time, he often felt that his conservation efforts were a record of failure, he eventually served as officer and director of The Atlantic Salmon Federation. Today, we all reap the benefits of his environmental legacy.

During the long arc of his life, Wulff established himself as a fine pilot, distinguished outdoor filmmaker, and decade-long producer of the ABC series: *American Sportsman*. At the end of *Bush Pilot Angler*, Lee Wulff wrote:

*"It was a time when my plane and I were one, when the world I flew over seemed to belong to me...I have endless recollections of a world of air and sea, of evergreen forests and blue lakes lying quietly in the sun."*

May we all live with such zest.

*My Health Is Better In November: Thirty-five Stories of Hunting and Fishing in the South*

by Havilah Babcock  
1947 University of South Carolina Press  
Hardcover with line drawings  
ISBN: 0-87249-440-3



"What this country really needs, I decided, is a good cheap chigger remedy." A native of Appomattox, Virginia, the late outdoor essayist Havilah Babcock was head of the English Department at the University of South Carolina for 27 years. In an unusual move away from esoteric, academic tomes, the university's press saw fit to publish five volumes of Babcock's collected writing. Lucky us. Few outdoor writers can match his literate, wacky, often wistful humor. Babcock is James Thurber with a shotgun... S.J. Perelman with fishing rod in tow.

*My Health is Better in November*, is an anthology of essays previously published in *Field and Stream*, *Sports Afield*, *Outdoor Life* and *Hunting and Fishing*. Babcock educates and entertains on subjects as varied as the adaptable crappie, dumb bass, shot-dented topwater plugs, gun-shy dogs and apocalyptic chigger infestations. While reading these essays spasms of laughter kept me in constant danger of tipping out of my chair. Babcock's self-effacing humor and attention to details of time and place, draw the reader close in every story.

On the flip side, the writing contains attitudes about gender and race that while not mean-spirited, are relics better left in Babcock's bygone era. Despite these intermittent blemishes, his work has established itself in the great canon of outdoor writing. Any hunter or angler, who has wandered the benevolent lands of the south, will relish these tales. □

## New Virginia Scenic River Site

On June 25, 2006, Governor Timothy M. Kaine signed legislation that adds a section of the Meherrin River in Brunswick County to the Virginia Scenic River System. The designation provides the Meherrin with official recognition of the natural, scenic, historic and recreational value of the river.

House Bill 104 and identical Senate Bill 527, introduced by Delegate Thomas Wright and Senator Frank



**Local residents gathered next to historic Gholson Bridge, along the Meherrin River in Brunswick County, as Governor Timothy M. Kaine signed legislation that added a 37-mile section of the river to the State's Scenic River System. The event marked the 20th river in the Scenic River Program, which is administered by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation.**

Ruff, designate the 37-mile segment of the Meherrin River which runs through Brunswick County as a state scenic river.

"It's great to see people from across the Lawrenceville community work together to designate the Meherrin as a Virginia Scenic River," Governor Kaine said. "This river is a vital part of the community's character, and this partnership will help to see that our children will enjoy the river for generations to come just as we enjoy it today. These scenic river designations help localities, like Lawrenceville, increase ecotourism, promote the area's natural beauty and quality of life, and add protections for water quality."

Virginia's Scenic Rivers Program is driven by locally submitted requests, and the designation of the Meherrin was requested by the Brunswick County Board of Supervisors. County Historian Gay Neale

originally petitioned to have the Meherrin River designated as a Virginia Scenic River, and has spent over a decade working towards this goal.

Governor Kaine was joined at the ceremonial bill signing by Brunswick County officials at the historic Gholson Bridge, spanning the Meherrin River. The bridge is listed on both the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

The Governor was in Lawrenceville with his family as a part of their participation in Bike Virginia, a bicycling tour that spans across Southside Virginia from South Hill to Emporia. □

## OUTDOOR CATALOG



The Virginia Wildlife Outdoor Online Catalog is the quick and easy way to purchase Department publications that include *Virginia Wildlife* magazine or calendar, and unique gifts like the new 2006 Limited Edition Collector's Knife. To order visit [www.dgif.virginia.gov](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov) or call (804) 367-2569.





**Don't Forget:  
Mandatory  
Duck Stamps  
& HIP**

All hunters (whether licensed or exempt from being licensed), who plan to hunt doves, waterfowl, rails, woodcock, snipe, coots, gallinules or moorhens in Virginia must be registered with the Virginia Harvest Information Program (HIP). HIP is required each year and a new registration number is needed for the 2006-2007 hunting season. To obtain a new HIP number migratory game bird hunters can register online at [www.VAHIP.com](http://www.VAHIP.com) or call 1-888-788-9772.

In addition, Virginia waterfowl hunters must obtain a Federal Duck Stamp and the new Virginia Migratory Waterfowl Conservation Stamp to hunt waterfowl in Virginia. The annual Migratory Waterfowl Conservation Stamp can be purchased for a fee of \$10.00 (resident or non-resident) at VDGIF license agents or clerks that sell Virginia hunting licenses or from the Department's Web site. To request collector stamps and prints, contact Mike Hinton at (540) 351-0564 or by e-mail at [ducks@hintons.org](mailto:ducks@hintons.org).



"We're a little early, Fred, they're just now putting down the decoys."

## Lifetime Licenses

Open the door to a lifetime of enjoyment in the great outdoors of Virginia with a lifetime freshwater fishing, hunting or trout license! It's an investment that keeps on giving.

For more information visit:

[http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/forms/lifetime\\_licenses/instructions.html](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/forms/lifetime_licenses/instructions.html) or call (804) 367-1076.

## Virginia Wildlife Photo Contest Reminder



The deadline for submitting photographs for the 2006 Virginia Wildlife Photography Contest is December 1, 2006. Winning photographs will appear in the March 2007, special issue of Virginia Wildlife magazine. For more information, visit the Department's Web site at: <http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/events/photocontest.pdf>.



*Find Game* is an interactive Web-based map viewer designed by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to provide better and more current information about hunting land location and access in Virginia. *Find Game* allows users to map hunting areas by location and/or by game species, along with hunting quality by species, land manager contact information, site description, facilities available, access information and associated Web links. To learn more about *Find Game* visit [www.dgif.virginia.gov/hunting/findgame](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/hunting/findgame).



# RECIPES

by Joan Cone

## How to Make Venison Tender

**T**his past hunting season, our friend Lee Carter of Williamsburg, gave us a young 6 point buck. I was determined to take my time butchering this deer and aging some of it in airtight bags in the refrigerator for up to 10 days. When working on the liver, I could tell the meat would be tender. After trimming the tenderloin, heart and ribs, these were vacuum packed and frozen immediately. For the next few days I worked on the boned-out neck meat and the two forequarters making all this into ground and stew meat. Lastly, the two hindquarters were butchered cutting steaks, roasts and more stew and ground meat. The hindquarter steaks were almost as tender as the tenderloin!

Here is a list of cuts and weights:

Tenderloin - 3 lbs. 10 oz.  
Deer heart - 12 oz.  
Deer liver - 1 pound  
Ribs (4 sections) - 4 lbs.  
Ground meat - 8 lbs.  
Stew meat - 5 lbs.  
Steaks - 5 lbs.  
Roasts (2 sirloin tip) - 3 lbs. 6 oz.  
Total - 30 lbs. 12 oz.

### Menu

*Venison and Vegetable Stew*  
*Spanish Salad with Lemon Dressing*  
*Glazed Cinnamon Apples*

### Venison and Vegetable Stew

1½ pound venison sirloin tip roast  
1 tablespoon vegetable oil  
1 teaspoon dried thyme leaves  
Salt and pepper to taste  
2 cups low sodium beef broth  
½ cup dry red table wine  
Garlic powder to taste  
1½ cups baby carrots  
1 cup frozen whole pearl onions or 1 sweet onion,  
cut in medium pieces  
2 tablespoons cornstarch dissolved in 2 tablespoons water  
1 package (8 ounces) frozen sugar peas

Cut the venison roast into ½-inch pieces. In a Dutch oven, heat oil over medium-high heat until hot. Add venison (half at a time) and brown evenly, stirring occasionally. Pour off drippings. Season with thyme, salt and pepper. Stir in broth, wine and garlic powder. Bring to a boil and reduce heat to low. Cover tightly and simmer for 1½ hours. Add carrots and onions. Cover and continue cooking for 35 to 40 minutes or until venison and vegetables

are tender. Bring stew to a boil over medium-high heat. Add cornstarch mixture. Cook and stir 1 minute. Stir in sugar snap peas. Reduce heat to medium and cook for 3 or 4 minutes or until peas are heated through. Serves 4 to 6.

### Spanish Salad with Lemon Dressing

1 medium head Romaine lettuce, cut crosswise in 1-inch strips  
2 small tomatoes, cut in wedges  
1 small cucumber peeled, cut in cubes  
1 small sweet white onion, cut in wedges  
12 black or green olives  
¼ cup olive oil  
Juice of 1 lemon (3 tablespoons)  
Garlic powder to taste  
½ teaspoon sugar  
Salt and pepper to taste

In large bowl combine lettuce, tomatoes, cucumber, onion and olives; chill. Whisk together remaining dressing ingredients. To serve, toss dressing with salad mixture. Divide on individual salad plates. Makes 4 servings.

### Glazed Cinnamon Apples (For crockpot)

This recipe came with Reynolds Slow Cooker Liners, making cleanup a pleasure.

1 Reynolds Slow Cooker Liner  
6 large Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored and cut in eight wedges  
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice  
½ cup granulated sugar  
½ cup packed light brown sugar  
2 tablespoons flour  
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg  
6 tablespoons butter, melted  
Vanilla ice cream

Open slow cooker liner and place it inside the crockpot bowl. Fit liner snugly against the bottom and sides of bowl; pull top of liner over rim of bowl. Place apples in the lined crockpot and drizzle with lemon juice. Mix granulated sugar, brown sugar, flour, cinnamon and nutmeg in a medium bowl. Sprinkle mixture over apples and stir gently to coat apples. Drizzle with butter. Place lid on crockpot. Cook on LOW heat for 3 hours or HIGH heat for 2 hours until apples are done. Carefully remove lid to allow steam to escape. Serve warm apple topping over ice cream. Makes 8 to 9 servings. □



# On The Water

by Jim Crosby



## Radios for Recreational Boating Safety

**B**efore you purchase anything else, make sure you have a VHF marine radio. A VHF marine radio is the single most important radio system you should buy. It is probably also the most inexpensive.

Further, if you plan to travel more than a few miles offshore, plan to purchase a Marine Frequency, High Frequency (MF/HF) radiotelephone or mobile satellite telephone, and an emergency position indicating radio beacon, or EPIRB. Mobile satellite telephones are becoming more common and more inexpensive. The mobile satellite will provide easier and clearer communications than the MF/HF radiotelephone, but the HF radiotelephone will receive high seas marine weather warnings.

Through the cooperation of the Federal Communications Commission and the Coast Guard, the old very high frequency (VHF) marine radio operating in the frequency modulation mode (FM) has been turned into a maritime mobile service identity (MMSI) radio through digital selective calling (DSC) to increase your safety on the water. I discussed this in detail in a previous column.

Does this mean you need to update your old marine radio? Yes, you do! The new models with the DSC feature have a one-button emergency transmit capability that sends out the vessel's unique MMSI number and, if properly connected to a GPS (Global Positioning System) or Loran receiver, the vessel's position identified by latitude and longitude. The radio continues to send the emergency signal even if the skipper is incapacitated. It allows an inexperienced user to send a goof-proof continuous distress message with the press of that single button. Aside from all these special features, it is still the same fully functional VHF radio with which we are all familiar.

If you have a VHF-FM radio, there are certain regulations in place for monitoring /listening to your radio.

Vessels not required to carry a marine radio (e.g. recreational vessels less than 20m length), but which voluntarily carry a radio, must maintain a watch on channel 16 (156.800 MHz) whenever the radio is operating and not being used to communicate.

All U.S. government and military vessels and shore stations having a VHF marine radio shall maintain a watch for reception of 156.8 MHz (channel 16) while underway or during their hours of service, whenever practicable.

Every power-driven vessel of 20m length or greater, every vessel of 100 tons and upward carrying one or more passengers for hire, every towing vessel of 26 foot length or greater, and every dredge and floating plant near a channel or fairway, must maintain a watch on both VHF channels 13 (156.650 MHz) and 16 (156.800 MHz) while the vessel is underway.

If you hear a distress message from a vessel and it is not answered, then you must answer. If you are reasonably sure that the distressed vessel is not in your vicinity, you should wait a short time for others to acknowledge.

Persons meeting this requirement must be capable of speaking the English language.

These rules apply to all foreign vessels, recreational vessels, federal government and military vessels as well as commercial vessels, operating within U.S. territorial waters.

Your unique MMSI number identifies you, your vessel, your homeport and all the pertinent information relating thereto.

Under an agreement with the Federal Communications Commission and the U.S. Coast Guard, BoatU.S. is giving boaters free MMSI ID numbers for ma-

rine radios with Digital Selective Calling (DSC). This new radio technology makes it much easier and faster to identify and find a boat in distress.

Digital selective calling (DSC), allows mariners to instantly send an automatically formatted distress alert to the Coast Guard or other rescue authority. Digital selective calling also allows mariners to initiate or receive distress, urgency, safety and routine radiotelephone calls to or from any similarly equipped vessel or shore station, without requiring either party to be near a radio loudspeaker. DSC acts like the dial and bell of a telephone, allowing you to "direct dial" and "ring" other radios, or allow others to "ring" you, without having to listen to a speaker. After the "private" digital hail, DSC radios automatically switch to an open VHF channel for voice communications. Voice communication is carried on an active working channel chosen by the caller making the initial hail.

For complete details on marine communications, you can go to: [www.navcen.uscg.gov/lnm/d5/](http://www.navcen.uscg.gov/lnm/d5/). □

*I sincerely appreciate questions, comments and suggestions as feedback. You can contact me at: [jimcrosby@adelphia.net](mailto:jimcrosby@adelphia.net)*





# Photo Tips

by Lynda Richardson

## Learning to Use Your Digital Camera's Menu

One of the best ways to learn about your digital camera is to study the features of your camera's menus. Digital cameras are menu driven and offer many options, depending on the camera you purchase. With the middle to higher end digital cameras, menus are basically the same in that they are divided into categories for camera set up, shooting and image playback. Sometimes additional modes or menus are added to offer options such as video/movie and/or panoramic stitching. For now, let's take a look at the three basic menu operations.

The **Set-Up Menu** is normally represented by an icon that looks like tools. The Set-Up Menu is where you build the foundation for your camera's basic operations. Depending on your camera's offerings, in this menu you can set the date and time, control file numbering, change LCD brightness, auto rotate vertical images, format your media cards, clean your sensor, and much more.

The **Shooting, Picture Taking or Record Menu** is normally represented by a camera icon. In this menu, you select what file type and size you want to use to record your images, such as RAW (only available in higher end cameras) or JPEG in various file sizes. You can also set up AEB or auto bracketing, white balance, color temperature, color space, "picture style" and even decide whether your camera beeps while shooting.

The **Playback or Review Menu** gives you options on what to do with the images you've shot. It is normally represented by a triangle in a box pointing right. In the Playback Menu, you can decide such options as how long you want to be able to view an image on the LCD, whether you want to "protect" an image from



Camera menus allow you to make choices in the operation of your digital camera.

being erased, you can delete images, and it even allows you to rotate an image as you view it.

Once you become familiar with your digital camera's menu options,

it will open up a world of new opportunities for capturing even better photographs. Be sure to check out the next "Photo Tips" column when I discuss how to protect your delicate digital camera from the elements! □

You are invited to submit one to five of your best images to "Image of the Month," Virginia Wildlife Magazine, P.O. Box 11104, (4010 West Broad Street), Richmond, VA, 23230-1104. Send original slides, high quality prints, or high res jpeg files on disk and include a self addressed, stamped envelope or other shipping method for return. Also, please include any pertinent information regarding how and where the image was captured, what camera, film and settings you used. I hope to see your image as our next, "Image of the Month!"



Congratulations go to Linda Caperton, of Richmond, for her up close and personal photograph of a male ruby-throated hummingbird enjoying a feeder at her weekend home in Susan, Va. Though this photograph was taken in April when hummingbirds first begin arriving to Virginia, this image should be a reminder that September is the month to bring in your nectar feeders to encourage the little tikes to be on their way south! Linda used a Canon EOS Digital Rebel XT camera and a zoom lens set at 255mm. ISO 400, 1/200th, f.10 with flash, handheld. Good job Linda!





# Naturally Wild

story and illustration  
by Spike Knuth

## Wilson's Plover *Charadrius wilsonia*

**I**t may resemble its more familiar cousin the killdeer, but you won't find this plover in pastures, on construction sites, or in gravel parking lots. The Wilson's plover is a bird of the quiet, sandy, shell beaches, sand spits or mud flats exposed at low tides, usually near the oceanfront and adjacent to coastal marshlands.

Measuring about 8 inches, it is colored like the killdeer with ashy-gray or brownish-gray upper parts, white underparts, but with a single black breast band, rather than two, and a black patch in front of the crown. The forehead, a line over the eyes, and the chin and a line to the back; giving a semblance of a ring, are white. The head is large in comparison to the body and the black bill is fairly long and large. Some of its other names are thick-billed plover, ringneck and stuttering plover. It is named after Alexander Wilson, often regarded as the father of American ornithology.

The Wilson's plover breeds in southern North America from Texas east along the Gulf Coast to Florida and up the South Atlantic Coast to southeastern Virginia, occasionally as far north as New Jersey. It arrives to Virginia fairly early in spring.

Its nest is a shallow cavity on sand amid a scattering of pebbles, shells, driftwood, and other beach debris, and patches of beach grasses. Often it nests in loose colonies with some of their own as well as little terns and oystercatchers. About three pale olive or greenish gray eggs, marked with dark brown are laid.

Hatching takes place in about two weeks and the young are able to run about and feed almost immediately. Their colors match their sur-

roundings and they can find cover quickly and become motionless to escape detection. The female will fake injury in an attempt to lead intruders away, a common trait of many sandpipers and plovers,

The calls of these plovers can be described as flute-like whistles with notes sounding like "wheet" or "whip;" "queet-queet-quit-quit-it." Wilson's plovers will feed night or day on small marine insects, tiny shellfish, sandworms, small crabs, shrimps, mollusks and flies.

Wilson's plovers begin gathering in loose flocks at the end of July when all the young are fledged, and begin movements south to winter along the Gulf Coast and as far south as Guatemala. □





# The New 2006-2007

# Virginia Wildlife Calendar

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It's that time of year again to purchase the 2006-2007 Virginia Wildlife Calendar, one of the most informative and beautiful wildlife calendars in the country. No other calendar will give you the best times to go fishing and hunting, unique natural resource information that will amaze and educate you, and spectacular wildlife art and photographs that give you an up-close look at Virginia's incredible wildlife.

The Virginia Wildlife Calendar is a production of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, and customers are reminded that the wildlife calendar starts in September 2006 and will run through December 2007. Quantities are limited and sales will run from July 15 through January 31, 2007, so don't wait. Order now!

The 2006-2007 Virginia Wildlife Calendars are \$10.00 each. Make check payable to: *Treasurer of Virginia* and send to Virginia Wildlife Calendar, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA. 23230-1104. If you would like to use your VISA or MasterCard you can order online at [www.dgif.virginia.gov](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov). **Please allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery.**



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